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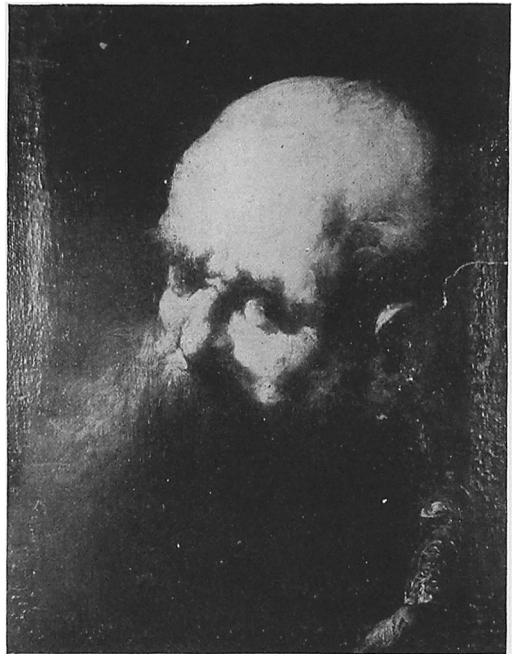
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STUDY OF A HEAD
By Rembrandt
—In collection at the University of Notre Dame



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Rembrandt, the Poet-Painter

By FRANK WILLIAM HOLSLAG

REMBRANDT'S high position in the world of art rests not only upon the originality of his mind, the power of his imagination, his profound sympathy with his subjects, the boldness of light and shade, the thoroughness of his modeling, and his subtle coloring, but above all, upon the intense humanity of the man himself.

He was great in conception and execution because he was a poet as well as a painter, and an idealist as well as a realist. To this rare combination we may attribute the secret of that power which justly pronounces him the greatest of all Dutch Masters.

Rembrandt devoted the most of his time to the study and the painting of people around him. To him, beggars, cripples and royalty were all alike as long as they supplied a picturesque face or an interesting form. Life, character, and above all, *light*, were the particular aims of his studies.

Early in life he acquired a thorough knowledge of anatomy and upon mastering the brush he took unusual delight in modeling human heads and bodies. In the former, his object was not to portray exterior features and form alone, but to disclose the traits and character of the inner man. It was the carefulness of detail and

the thoroughness of such work that laid the foundation for his great triumphs that came afterwards.

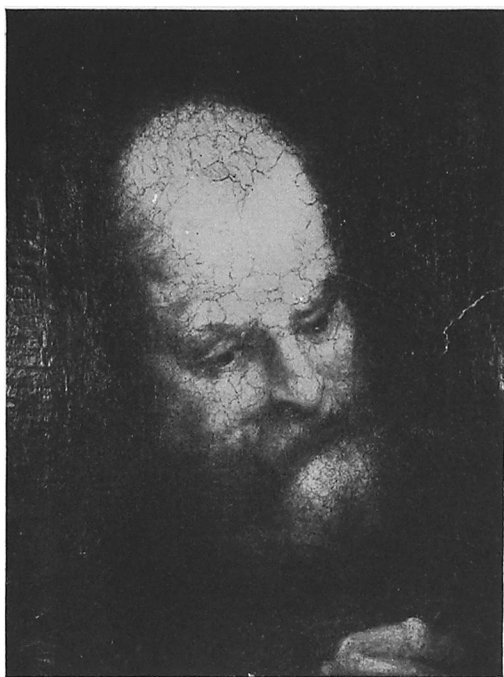
As he grew older *light* and *shade* became almost an obsession with him, and from the moment he mastered their mysteries, he began disclosing their wonderful powers as depictive agents both for realistic and poetical effects.

I recall a statement heard in one of those ugly little mansards which he occupied in Amsterdam. 'Twas said, that he used to remove the single pane of glass in the tiled roof of the low, dark attic so as to stick, through this solitary light-giving hole, a sort of a stove pipe, wedged in with rags. Then, in the darkness of the attic he would pose his subject directly beneath the lower end of the pipe. This may have been rumor, yet most of his settings suggest just such a method.

During the greater part of his life and particularly while doing figures, he loved to portray in high-lights and shadows, the heads of old men, done in firm, hard workmanship and in full detail. In such treatments he has never been surpassed and as examples of this work, three of the valuable Rembrandts at the University of Notre Dame are here shown.

They form a series in which the same subject is done in the artist's subtle coloring and firm, solid manner. His model was undoubtedly one of Amsterdam's vast army of robust Dutch Jews who possessed a superbly developed head.

In the first picture Rembrandt brings out every cranial detail with all the observing power of a phrenologist. There is absolutely no exaggeration although there is a pronounced expression of amused inspection in the subject's face. As a flesh painting it glows with reality through fine coloring and light, for in the firm muscles the blood seems to fairly pulsate beneath the warm skin.



STUDY OF A HEAD

By Rembrandt

—In collection at the University of Notre Dame

He invests the second picture with a greater sense of light by tilting the head, and creating an expression of serious surprise. In this study there is strong, yet not a painful dramatic attitude. The shadows are more transparent and we find the blending of light and shade almost perfect in their delicate union.

The third picture is less bold in manner for it depicts an expression of complacent mediation. This portrayal discloses an exquisite elegance in the richness of its tone and it is truly a fine example of the Dutch Master's magic play of color.

In this study of heads, Rembrandt exposes his love for the warmer tones of red and yellow, producing with his master-touch those harmonious effects for which he is celebrated.